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objected to or become a final order by operation of law, the case may be settled if the Assistant Secretary, the complainant and the named person agree to a settlement.

(2) *Adjudicatory settlements.* At any time after the filing of objections to the Assistant Secretary's findings and/or order, the case may be settled if the participating parties agree to a settlement and the settlement is approved by the administrative law judge if the case is before the judge, or by the Board if a timely petition for review has been filed with the Board. A copy of the settlement shall be filed with the administrative law judge or the Board, as the case may be.

(e) Any settlement approved by the Assistant Secretary, the administrative law judge, or the Board, shall constitute the final order of the Secretary and may be enforced pursuant to § 1979.113.

§ 1979.112 Judicial review.

(a) Within 60 days after the issuance of a final order by the Board under § 1979.110, any person adversely affected or aggrieved by the order may file a petition for review of the order in the United States Court of Appeals for the circuit in which the violation allegedly occurred or the circuit in which the complainant resided on the date of the violation. A final order of the Board is not subject to judicial review in any criminal or other civil proceeding.

(b) If a timely petition for review is filed, the record of a case, including the record of proceedings before the administrative law judge, will be transmitted by the Board to the appropriate court pursuant to the rules of the court.

§ 1979.113 Judicial enforcement.

Whenever any person has failed to comply with a preliminary order of reinstatement or a final order or the terms of a settlement agreement, the Secretary or a person on whose behalf the order was issued may file a civil action seeking enforcement of the order in the United States district court for the district in which the violation was found to have occurred.

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§ 1979.114 Special circumstances; waiver of rules.

In special circumstances not contemplated by the provisions of this part, or for good cause shown, the administrative law judge or the Board on review may, upon application, after three days notice to all parties and interveners, waive any rule or issue any orders that justice or the administration of the Act requires.

PART 1980—PROCEDURES FOR THE HANDLING OF RETALIATION COMPLAINTS UNDER SECTION 806 OF THE SARBANES-OXLEY ACT OF 2002, AS AMENDED

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AUTHORITY: 18 U.S.C. 1514A, as amended by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, Pub. L. 111–203 (July 21, 2010); Secretary of Labor's Order No. 4–2010 (Sept. 2, 2010), 75 FR 55355 (Sept. 10, 2010); Secretary of Labor's Order No. 1–2010 (Jan. 15, 2010), 75 FR 3924 (Jan. 25, 2010).

SOURCE: 76 FR 68092, Nov. 3, 2011, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Complaints, Investigations, Findings and Preliminary Orders

§ 1980.100 Purpose and scope.

(a) This part implements procedures under section 806 of the Corporate and Criminal Fraud Accountability Act of 2002, Title VIII of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (Sarbanes-Oxley or Act), enacted into law July 30, 2002, as amended by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, enacted into law July 21, 2010. Sarbanes-Oxley provides for employee protection from retaliation by companies, their subsidiaries and affiliates, officers, employees, contractors, subcontractors, and agents because the employee has engaged in protected activity pertaining to a violation or alleged violation of 18 U.S.C. 1341, 1343, 1344, or 1348, or any rule or regulation of the Securities and Exchange Commission, or any provision of Federal law relating to fraud against shareholders. Sarbanes-Oxley also provides for employee protection from retaliation by nationally recognized statistical rating organizations, their officers, employees, contractors, subcontractors or agents because the employee has engaged in protected activity.

(b) This part establishes procedures pursuant to Sarbanes-Oxley for the expeditious handling of retaliation complaints made by employees, or by persons acting on their behalf. These rules, together with those codified at 29 CFR part 18, set forth the procedures for submission of complaints under Sarbanes-Oxley, investigations, issuance of findings and preliminary orders, objections to findings and orders, litigation before administrative law judges, post-hearing administrative review, withdrawals, and settlements.

§ 1980.101 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) *Act* means section 806 of the Corporate and Criminal Fraud Accountability Act of 2002, Title VIII of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107-204, July 30, 2002, codified at 18 U.S.C. 1514A, as amended by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Pro-

tection Act of 2010, Pub. L. 111-203, July 21, 2010.

(b) *Assistant Secretary* means the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health or the person or persons to whom he or she delegates authority under the Act.

(c) *Business days* means days other than Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

(d) *Company* means any company with a class of securities registered under section 12 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78f) or any company required to file reports under section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78o(d)) including any subsidiary or affiliate whose financial information is included in the consolidated financial statements of such company.

(e) *Complainant* means the employee who filed a complaint under the Act or on whose behalf a complaint was filed.

(f) *Covered person* means any company, including any subsidiary or affiliate whose financial information is included in the consolidated financial statements of such company, or any nationally recognized statistical rating organization, or any officer, employee, contractor, subcontractor, or agent of such company or nationally recognized statistical rating organization.

(g) *Employee* means an individual presently or formerly working for a covered person, an individual applying to work for a covered person, or an individual whose employment could be affected by a covered person.

(h) *Nationally recognized statistical rating organization* means a credit rating agency under 15 U.S.C. 78c(61) that:

(1) Issues credit ratings certified by qualified institutional buyers, in accordance with 15 U.S.C. 78o-7(a)(1)(B)(ix), with respect to:

(i) Financial institutions, brokers, or dealers;

(ii) Insurance companies;

(iii) Corporate issuers;

(iv) Issuers of asset-backed securities (as that term is defined in section 1101(c) of part 229 of title 17, Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on September 29, 2006);

(v) Issuers of government securities, municipal securities, or securities issued by a foreign government; or

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(vi) A combination of one or more categories of obligors described in any of paragraphs (h)(1)(i) through (v) of this section; and

(2) Is registered under 15 U.S.C. 78o–7.

(i) *OSHA* means the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the United States Department of Labor.

(j) *Person* means one or more individuals, partnerships, associations, companies, corporations, business trusts, legal representatives or any group of persons.

(k) *Respondent* means the person named in the complaint who is alleged to have violated the Act.

(l) *Secretary* means the Secretary of Labor or persons to whom authority under the Act has been delegated.

(m) Any future statutory amendments that affect the definition of a term or terms listed in this section will apply in lieu of the definition stated herein.

§ 1980.102 Obligations and prohibited acts.

(a) No covered person may discharge, demote, suspend, threaten, harass or in any other manner retaliate against, including, but not limited to, intimidating, threatening, restraining, coercing, blacklisting or disciplining, any employee with respect to the employee's compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because the employee, or any person acting pursuant to the employee's request, has engaged in any of the activities specified in paragraphs (b)(1) and (2) of this section.

(b) An employee is protected against retaliation (as described in paragraph (a) of this section) by a covered person for any lawful act done by the employee:

(1) To provide information, cause information to be provided, or otherwise assist in an investigation regarding any conduct which the employee reasonably believes constitutes a violation of 18 U.S.C. 1341, 1343, 1344, or 1348, any rule or regulation of the Securities and Exchange Commission, or any provision of Federal law relating to fraud against shareholders, when the information or assistance is provided to or the investigation is conducted by—

(i) A Federal regulatory or law enforcement agency;

(ii) Any Member of Congress or any committee of Congress; or

(iii) A person with supervisory authority over the employee (or such other person working for the employer who has the authority to investigate, discover, or terminate misconduct); or

(2) To file, cause to be filed, testify, participate in, or otherwise assist in a proceeding filed or about to be filed (with any knowledge of the employer) relating to an alleged violation of 18 U.S.C. 1341, 1343, 1344, or 1348, any rule or regulation of the Securities and Exchange Commission, or any provision of Federal law relating to fraud against shareholders.

[76 FR 68092, Nov. 3, 2011, as amended at 76 FR 78151, Dec. 16, 2011]

§ 1980.103 Filing of retaliation complaints.

(a) *Who may file.* An employee who believes that he or she has been retaliated against by a covered person in violation of the Act may file, or have filed on the employee's behalf, a complaint alleging such retaliation.

(b) *Nature of filing.* No particular form of complaint is required. A complaint may be filed orally or in writing. Oral complaints will be reduced to writing by OSHA. If the complainant is unable to file the complaint in English, OSHA will accept the complaint in any language.

(c) *Place of filing.* The complaint should be filed with the OSHA office responsible for enforcement activities in the geographical area where the employee resides or was employed, but may be filed with any OSHA officer or employee. Addresses and telephone numbers for these officials are set forth in local directories and at the following Internet address: <http://www.osha.gov>

(d) *Time for filing.* Within 180 days after an alleged violation of the Act occurs or after the date on which the employee became aware of the alleged violation of the Act, any employee who believes that he or she has been retaliated against in violation of the Act may file, or have filed on the employee's behalf, a complaint alleging such retaliation. The date of the postmark,

facsimile transmittal, email communication, telephone call, hand-delivery, delivery to a third-party commercial carrier, or in-person filing at an OSHA office will be considered the date of filing. The time for filing a complaint may be tolled for reasons warranted by applicable case law.

§ 1980.104 Investigation.

(a) Upon receipt of a complaint in the investigating office, the Assistant Secretary will notify the respondent of the filing of the complaint by providing a copy of the complaint, redacted, if necessary, in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and other applicable confidentiality laws, and will also notify the respondent of its rights under paragraphs (b) and (f) of this section and paragraph (e) of § 1980.110. The Assistant Secretary will provide a copy of the unredacted complaint to the complainant (or complainant's legal counsel, if complainant is represented by counsel) and to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

(b) Within 20 days of receipt of the notice of the filing of the complaint provided under paragraph (a) of this section, the respondent may submit to the Assistant Secretary a written statement and any affidavits or documents substantiating its position. Within the same 20 days, the respondent may request a meeting with the Assistant Secretary to present its position.

(c) Throughout the investigation, the agency will provide to the complainant (or the complainant's legal counsel if complainant is represented by counsel) a copy of all of respondent's submissions to the agency that are responsive to the complainant's whistleblower complaint. Before providing such materials to the complainant, the agency will redact them, if necessary, in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and other applicable confidentiality laws. The agency will also provide the complainant with an opportunity to respond to such submissions.

(d) Investigations will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of any person who provides information on a confidential basis, other than the complainant, in accordance with part 70 of this title.

(e)(1) A complaint will be dismissed unless the complainant has made a *prima facie* showing that protected activity was a contributing factor in the adverse action alleged in the complaint.

(2) The complaint, supplemented as appropriate by interviews of the complainant, must allege the existence of facts and evidence to make a *prima facie* showing as follows:

(i) The employee engaged in a protected activity;

(ii) The respondent knew or suspected that the employee engaged in the protected activity;

(iii) The employee suffered an adverse action; and

(iv) The circumstances were sufficient to raise the inference that the protected activity was a contributing factor in the adverse action.

(3) For purposes of determining whether to investigate, the complainant will be considered to have met the required burden if the complaint on its face, supplemented as appropriate through interviews of the complainant, alleges the existence of facts and either direct or circumstantial evidence to meet the required showing, *i.e.*, to give rise to an inference that the respondent knew or suspected that the employee engaged in protected activity and that the protected activity was a contributing factor in the adverse action. The burden may be satisfied, for example, if the complaint shows that the adverse personnel action took place shortly after the protected activity, giving rise to the inference that it was a factor in the adverse action. If the required showing has not been made, the complainant (or the complainant's legal counsel, if complainant is represented by counsel) will be so notified and the investigation will not commence.

(4) Notwithstanding a finding that a complainant has made a *prima facie* showing, as required by this section, an investigation of the complaint shall not be conducted or will be discontinued if the respondent demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same adverse action in the absence of the complainant's protected activity.

(5) If the respondent fails to make a timely response or fails to satisfy the burden set forth in the prior paragraph, the Assistant Secretary will proceed with the investigation. The investigation will proceed whenever it is necessary or appropriate to confirm or verify the information provided by the respondent.

(f) Prior to the issuance of findings and a preliminary order as provided for in § 1980.105, if the Assistant Secretary has reasonable cause, on the basis of information gathered under the procedures of this part, to believe that the respondent has violated the Act and that preliminary reinstatement is warranted, the Assistant Secretary will again contact the respondent (or the respondent's legal counsel, if respondent is represented by counsel) to give notice of the substance of the relevant evidence supporting the complainant's allegations as developed during the course of the investigation. This evidence includes any witness statements, which will be redacted to protect the identity of confidential informants where statements were given in confidence; if the statements cannot be redacted without revealing the identity of confidential informants, summaries of their contents will be provided. The complainant will also receive a copy of the materials that must be provided to the respondent under this paragraph. Before providing such materials to the complainant, the agency will redact them, if necessary, in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and other applicable confidentiality laws. The respondent will be given the opportunity to submit a written response, to meet with the investigators, to present statements from witnesses in support of its position, and to present legal and factual arguments. The respondent will present this evidence within 10 business days of the Assistant Secretary's notification pursuant to this paragraph, or as soon afterwards as the Assistant Secretary and the respondent can agree, if the interests of justice so require.

§ 1980.105 Issuance of findings and preliminary orders.

(a) After considering all the relevant information collected during the inves-

tigation, the Assistant Secretary shall issue, within 60 days of filing of the complaint, written findings as to whether or not there is reasonable cause to believe that the respondent has retaliated against the complainant in violation of the Act.

(1) If the Assistant Secretary concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that a violation has occurred, he or she shall accompany the findings with a preliminary order providing relief to the complainant. The preliminary order will include all relief necessary to make the employee whole, including reinstatement with the same seniority status that the complainant would have had but for the retaliation; back pay with interest; and compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the retaliation, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney's fees. Interest on back pay will be calculated using the interest rate applicable to underpayment of taxes under 26 U.S.C. 6621 and will be compounded daily.

(2) If the Assistant Secretary concludes that a violation has not occurred, the Assistant Secretary will notify the parties of that finding.

(b) The findings, and where appropriate, the preliminary order will be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to all parties of record (and each party's legal counsel if the party is represented by counsel). The findings, and where appropriate, the preliminary order will inform the parties of the right to object to the findings and/or order and to request a hearing, and of the right of the respondent to request an award of attorney's fees not exceeding \$1,000 from the administrative law judge (ALJ) regardless of whether the respondent has filed objections, if the complaint was frivolous or brought in bad faith. The findings, and where appropriate, the preliminary order, also will give the address of the Chief Administrative Law Judge. At the same time, the Assistant Secretary will file with the Chief Administrative Law Judge, U.S. Department of Labor, a copy of the original complaint and a copy of the findings and/or order.

(c) The findings and any preliminary order will be effective 30 days after receipt by the respondent (or the respondent's legal counsel if the respondent is represented by counsel), or on the compliance date set forth in the preliminary order, whichever is later, unless an objection and/or a request for hearing has been timely filed as provided at §1980.106. However, the portion of any preliminary order requiring reinstatement will be effective immediately upon the respondent's receipt of the findings and the preliminary order, regardless of any objections to the findings and/or the order.

Subpart B—Litigation

§1980.106 Objections to the findings and the preliminary order and request for a hearing.

(a) Any party who desires review, including judicial review, of the findings and preliminary order, or a respondent alleging that the complaint was frivolous or brought in bad faith who seeks an award of attorney's fees under the Act, must file any objections and/or a request for a hearing on the record within 30 days of receipt of the findings and preliminary order pursuant to §1980.105(b). The objections, request for a hearing, and/or request for attorney's fees must be in writing and state whether the objections are to the findings, the preliminary order, and/or whether there should be an award of attorney's fees. The date of the postmark, facsimile transmittal, or email communication is considered the date of filing; if the objection is filed in person, by hand-delivery or other means, the objection is filed upon receipt. Objections must be filed with the Chief Administrative Law Judge, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20001, and copies of the objections must be mailed at the same time to the other parties of record, the OSHA official who issued the findings and order, the Assistant Secretary, and the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor.

(b) If a timely objection is filed, all provisions of the preliminary order will be stayed, except for the portion requiring preliminary reinstatement, which shall not be automatically

stayed. The portion of the preliminary order requiring reinstatement will be effective immediately upon the respondent's receipt of the findings and preliminary order, regardless of any objections to the order. The respondent may file a motion with the Office of Administrative Law Judges for a stay of the Assistant Secretary's preliminary order of reinstatement, which shall be granted only based on exceptional circumstances. If no timely objection is filed with respect to either the findings or the preliminary order, the findings and/or preliminary order shall become the final decision of the Secretary, not subject to judicial review.

§1980.107 Hearings.

(a) Except as provided in this part, proceedings will be conducted in accordance with the rules of practice and procedure for administrative hearings before the Office of Administrative Law Judges, codified at subpart A of Part 18 of this title.

(b) Upon receipt of an objection and request for hearing, the Chief Administrative Law Judge will promptly assign the case to an ALJ who will notify the parties, by certified mail, of the day, time, and place of hearing. The hearing is to commence expeditiously, except upon a showing of good cause or unless otherwise agreed to by the parties. Hearings will be conducted *de novo*, on the record. Administrative law judges have broad discretion to limit discovery in order to expedite the hearing.

(c) If both the complainant and the respondent object to the findings and/or order, the objections will be consolidated and a single hearing will be conducted.

(d) Formal rules of evidence will not apply, but rules or principles designed to assure production of the most probative evidence will be applied. The administrative law judge may exclude evidence that is immaterial, irrelevant, or unduly repetitious.

§1980.108 Role of Federal agencies.

(a)(1) The complainant and the respondent will be parties in every proceeding. At the Assistant Secretary's discretion, the Assistant Secretary may participate as a party or as *amicus*

curiae at any time at any stage of the proceedings. This right to participate includes, but is not limited to, the right to petition for review of a decision of an ALJ, including a decision approving or rejecting a settlement agreement between the complainant and the respondent.

(2) Copies of documents in all cases, whether or not the Assistant Secretary is participating in the proceeding, must be sent to the Assistant Secretary, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and to the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor, as well as all other parties.

(b) The Securities and Exchange Commission, if interested in a proceeding, may participate as *amicus curiae* at any time in the proceeding, at the Commission's discretion. At the request of the Securities and Exchange Commission, copies of all pleadings in a case must be sent to the Commission, whether or not the Commission is participating in the proceeding.

§ 1980.109 Decision and orders of the administrative law judge.

(a) The decision of the ALJ will contain appropriate findings, conclusions, and an order pertaining to the remedies provided in paragraph (d) of this section, as appropriate. A determination that a violation has occurred may be made only if the complainant has demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that protected activity was a contributing factor in the adverse action alleged in the complaint.

(b) If the complainant has satisfied the burden set forth in the prior paragraph, relief may not be ordered if the respondent demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same adverse action in the absence of any protected activity.

(c) Neither the Assistant Secretary's determination to dismiss a complaint without completing an investigation pursuant to § 1980.104(e) nor the Assistant Secretary's determination to proceed with an investigation is subject to review by the ALJ, and a complaint may not be remanded for the completion of an investigation or for additional findings on the basis that a determination to dismiss was made in

error. Rather, if there otherwise is jurisdiction, the ALJ will hear the case on the merits or dispose of the matter without a hearing if the facts and circumstances warrant.

(d)(1) If the ALJ concludes that the respondent has violated the law, the order will provide all relief necessary to make the employee whole, including reinstatement with the same seniority status that the complainant would have had but for the retaliation; back pay with interest; and compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the retaliation, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney's fees. Interest on back pay will be calculated using the interest rate applicable to underpayment of taxes under 26 U.S.C. 6621 and will be compounded daily.

(2) If the ALJ determines that the respondent has not violated the law, an order will be issued denying the complaint. If, upon the request of the respondent, the ALJ determines that a complaint was frivolous or was brought in bad faith, the judge may award to the respondent a reasonable attorney's fee, not exceeding \$1,000.

(e) The decision will be served upon all parties to the proceeding, the Assistant Secretary, and the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor. Any ALJ's decision requiring reinstatement or lifting an order of reinstatement by the Assistant Secretary will be effective immediately upon receipt of the decision by the respondent. All other portions of the ALJ's order will be effective 10 business days after the date of the decision unless a timely petition for review has been filed with the Administrative Review Board.

§ 1980.110 Decision and orders of the Administrative Review Board.

(a) Any party desiring to seek review, including judicial review, of a decision of the ALJ, or a respondent alleging that the complaint was frivolous or brought in bad faith who seeks an award of attorney's fees, must file a written petition for review with the Administrative Review Board, U.S. Department of Labor (ARB), which has been delegated the authority to act for the Secretary and issue final decisions

under this part. The decision of the ALJ will become the final order of the Secretary unless, pursuant to this section, a petition for review is timely filed with the ARB, and the ARB accepts the petition for review. The parties should identify in their petitions for review the legal conclusions or orders to which they object, or the objections may be deemed waived. A petition must be filed within 10 business days of the date of the decision of the ALJ. The date of the postmark, facsimile transmittal, or email communication will be considered to be the date of filing; if the petition is filed in person, by hand-delivery or other means, the petition is considered filed upon receipt. The petition must be served on all parties and on the Chief Administrative Law Judge at the time it is filed with the ARB. Copies of the petition for review and all briefs must be served on the Assistant Secretary, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and on the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor.

(b) If a timely petition for review is filed pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section, the decision of the ALJ will become the final order of the Secretary unless the ARB, within 30 days of the filing of the petition, issues an order notifying the parties that the case has been accepted for review. If a case is accepted for review, the decision of the ALJ will be inoperative unless and until the ARB issues an order adopting the decision, except that a preliminary order of reinstatement will be effective while review is conducted by the ARB, unless the ARB grants a motion by the respondent to stay the order based on exceptional circumstances. The ARB will specify the terms under which any briefs are to be filed. The ARB will review the factual determinations of the ALJ under the substantial evidence standard. If no timely petition for review is filed, or the ARB denies review, the decision of the ALJ will become the final order of the Secretary. If no timely petition for review is filed, the resulting final order is not subject to judicial review.

(c) The final decision of the ARB shall be issued within 120 days of the conclusion of the hearing, which will

be deemed to be 10 business days after the date of the decision of the ALJ unless a motion for reconsideration has been filed with the ALJ in the interim. The ARB's final decision will be served upon all parties and the Chief Administrative Law Judge by mail. The final decision will also be served on the Assistant Secretary, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and on the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, even if the Assistant Secretary is not a party.

(d) If the ARB concludes that the respondent has violated the law, the final order will include all relief necessary to make the complainant whole, including reinstatement with the same seniority status that the complainant would have had but for the retaliation; back pay with interest; and compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the retaliation, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney's fees. Interest on back pay will be calculated using the interest rate applicable to underpayment of taxes under 26 U.S.C. 6621 and will be compounded daily.

(e) If the ARB determines that the respondent has not violated the law, an order will be issued denying the complaint. If, upon the request of the respondent, the ARB determines that a complaint was frivolous or was brought in bad faith, the ARB may award to the respondent a reasonable attorney's fee, not exceeding \$1,000.

Subpart C—Miscellaneous Provisions

§ 1980.111 Withdrawal of complaints, objections, and findings; settlement.

(a) At any time prior to the filing of objections to the Assistant Secretary's findings and/or preliminary order, a complainant may withdraw his or her complaint by notifying the Assistant Secretary, orally or in writing, of his or her withdrawal. The Assistant Secretary then will confirm in writing the complainant's desire to withdraw and determine whether to approve the withdrawal. The Assistant Secretary will notify the parties (and each party's legal counsel if the party is represented by counsel) of the approval of any withdrawal. If the complaint is

withdrawn because of settlement, the settlement must be submitted for approval in accordance with paragraph (d) of this section. A complainant may not withdraw his or her complaint after the filing of objections to the Assistant Secretary's findings and/or preliminary order.

(b) The Assistant Secretary may withdraw his or her findings and/or preliminary order at any time before the expiration of the 30-day objection period described in §1980.106, provided that no objection has yet been filed, and substitute new findings and/or preliminary order. The date of the receipt of the substituted findings and/or order will begin a new 30-day objection period.

(c) At any time before the Assistant Secretary's findings and/or order become final, a party may withdraw its objections to the Assistant Secretary's findings and/or order by filing a written withdrawal with the ALJ. If the case is on review with the ARB, a party may withdraw its petition for review of an ALJ's decision at any time before that decision becomes final by filing a written withdrawal with the ARB. The ALJ or the ARB, as the case may be, will determine whether to approve the withdrawal of the objections or the petition for review. If the ALJ approves a request to withdraw objections to the Assistant Secretary's findings or order, and there are no other pending objections, the Assistant Secretary's findings and order will become the final order of the Secretary. If the ARB approves a request to withdraw a petition for review of an ALJ decision, and there are no other pending petitions for review of that decision, the ALJ's decision will become the final order of the Secretary. If objections or a petition for review are withdrawn because of settlement, the settlement must be submitted for approval in accordance with paragraph (d) of this section.

(d)(1) *Investigative settlements.* At any time after the filing of a complaint, and before the findings and/or order are objected to or become a final order by operation of law, the case may be settled if the Assistant Secretary, the complainant and the respondent agree to a settlement. The Assistant Secretary's approval of a settlement

reached by the respondent and the complainant demonstrates his or her consent and achieves the consent of all three parties.

(2) *Adjudicatory settlements.* At any time after the filing of objections to the Assistant Secretary's findings and/or order, the case may be settled if the participating parties agree to a settlement and the settlement is approved by the ALJ if the case is before the judge, or by the ARB if the ARB has accepted the case for review. A copy of the settlement will be filed with the ALJ or the ARB, as the case may be.

(e) Any settlement approved by the Assistant Secretary, the ALJ, or the ARB, will constitute the final order of the Secretary and may be enforced pursuant to §1980.113.

§ 1980.112 Judicial review.

(a) Within 60 days after the issuance of a final order under §§1980.109 and 1980.110, any person adversely affected or aggrieved by the order may file a petition for review of the order in the United States Court of Appeals for the circuit in which the violation allegedly occurred or the circuit in which the complainant resided on the date of the violation.

(b) A final order of the ARB is not subject to judicial review in any criminal or other civil proceeding.

(c) If a timely petition for review is filed, the record of a case, including the record of proceedings before the ALJ, will be transmitted by the ARB to the appropriate court pursuant to the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure and the local rules of such court.

§ 1980.113 Judicial enforcement.

Whenever any person has failed to comply with a preliminary order of reinstatement, or a final order, including one approving a settlement agreement, issued under the Act, the Secretary or a person on whose behalf the order was issued may file a civil action seeking enforcement of the order in the United States district court for the district in which the violation was found to have occurred. In such civil actions, the district court will have jurisdiction to grant all appropriate relief, including, but not limited to, injunctive relief and compensatory damages, including:

(a) Reinstatement with the same seniority status that the employee would have had, but for the discharge or retaliation;

(b) The amount of back pay, with interest; and

(c) Compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the discharge or retaliation, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney's fees.

§ 1980.114 District court jurisdiction of retaliation complaints.

(a) If the Secretary has not issued a final decision within 180 days of the filing of the complaint, and there is no showing that there has been delay due to the bad faith of the complainant, the complainant may bring an action at law or equity for *de novo* review in the appropriate district court of the United States, which will have jurisdiction over such an action without regard to the amount in controversy. A party to an action brought under this paragraph shall be entitled to trial by jury.

(b) Within seven days after filing a complaint in Federal court, a complainant must file with the Assistant Secretary, the ALJ, or the ARB, depending on where the proceeding is pending, a copy of the file-stamped complaint. A copy of the complaint also must be served on the Regional Administrator, the Assistant Secretary, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and on the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor.

§ 1980.115 Special circumstances; waiver of rules.

In special circumstances not contemplated by the provisions of this part, or for good cause shown, the ALJ or the ARB on review may, upon application, after three days notice to all parties, waive any rule or issue any orders that justice or the administration of the Act requires.

PART 1981—PROCEDURES FOR THE HANDLING OF DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS UNDER SECTION 6 OF THE PIPELINE SAFETY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2002

Subpart A—Complaints, Investigations, Findings, and Preliminary Orders

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AUTHORITY: 49 U.S.C. 60129; Secretary of Labor's Order 5-2002, 67 FR 65008 (October 22, 2002).

SOURCE: 69 FR 17591, Apr. 5, 2004, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Complaints, Investigations, Findings, and Preliminary Orders

§ 1981.100 Purpose and scope.

(a) This part implements procedures under section 6 of the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002, 49 U.S.C. 60129 ("the Pipeline Safety Act"), which provides for employee protection from discrimination by a person owning or operating a pipeline facility or a contractor or subcontractor of such person because the employee has engaged in protected activity pertaining to a violation or alleged violation of any order, regulation, or standard under chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title